

NSC BRIEFING

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BLOC FOOD SITUATION

- I. Despite much effort Bloc leaders have not solved the problem of greatly increasing agricultural production or significantly improving the diet of the population.
  - A. The principal agricultural production goals have not been met in the past, and there is little prospect that most of the goals established for the next few years will be achieved.
- II. Per capita <sup>availability</sup> food in the Bloc ranges from barely adequate to good. In some Bloc countries, such as China, the regime is trying to increase the quantity of food. In others, such as the USSR, increases are aimed at improving the quality of diet. At present, widespread starvation is not a problem.
  - A. There are striking differences among Bloc countries in the average per capita food consumption (see chart).
    1. The USSR and Poland have the most food available--around 3,000 calories per capita per day. This compares favorably with the US.
    2. China has the least--no more than 2,000 calories. This is still below the prewar level.
  - B. The quality of the diet throughout most of the Bloc is significantly inferior to that of the West (see chart).
    1. Grain and potatoes still comprise the bulk of the food in the Bloc.
    2. Meat consumption is much less than in the West.

- III. Only the European Satellites are expected to show any significant increase in per capita food availability this year.
- A. Although some increase is expected in Soviet meat production, grain production this year is down.
  - B. China's 1957 grain harvest was up, but the population increase was even greater.
- IV. The various Bloc countries have tried different approaches to the food problem. The most publicized experiments have been made by Khrushchev in the USSR.
- A. His major programs, on which his future may depend, include:
    - 1. The "new lands" program to bring vast acreages of virgin or idle land under grain cultivation.
    - 2. The corn program to expand the corn area nearly 7 times.
    - 3. The livestock program, launched this year, to match US per capita production of meat, milk and butter within the next several years.
  - B. All these programs have certain points of similarity.
    - 1. All should yield positive results but none is likely to be nearly as successful as Soviet leaders claim.
    - 2. All are relatively expensive.
    - 3. All have shown evidence of inadequate planning.
    - 4. But all have been put into effect with remarkable speed.
- V. The European Satellites have undertaken no dramatic programs, but have taken steps to increase the incentives of the farmers.
- A. This is particularly true of Poland which has revived private farming.

1. Poland must import one million tons of grain per year.

It is negotiating with the US on this.

B. In the long run these liberal policies should increase production in the Satellites.

VI. China, the most backward of major Bloc countries, completed the socialization of agriculture in 1956.

A. Efforts of the government will be directed toward consolidating its control of agriculture, while attempting to increase production through increased investment.

VII. In conclusion we feel that:

A. Caloric intake of the more industrialized bloc countries will be adequate during the next few years, barring unusual droughts or natural calamities.

1. There should be a moderate improvement in the quality of the diet.

B. In China it is most unlikely that increases in production will be significantly greater than the increase in population.